

FERGUSON SAYS REPORT OF COMMISSION UNFAIR

Declares Findings re Kapuskasing Are Detrimental to Prosperity of North Ontario.

Hon. G. H. Ferguson's long expected statement on the **Kapuskasing** question was delivered in the Legislature last night. In a speech of two hours and a half in duration, the Conservative leader accepted his share of responsibility for the administration of the colony, defended Deputy Minister Albert Grigg and other officials from censure, criticized the methods and findings of the investigating commission, and painted a glowing picture of the future and the resources of North Ontario.

Mr. Ferguson accused H. H. Dewart of having attempted to make political capital of the **Kapuskasing** colony at every opportunity.

Continuing, the speaker painted a glowing picture of the resources of North Ontario.

M. M. MacBride, South Brant, inquired as to the advisability of sending a group of school teachers to North Ontario, with a view to giving them first-hand knowledge of the district.

"We are already considering such a proposition," stated Hon. R. H. Grant, Minister of Education.

Continuing, Mr. Ferguson criticized the report of the commission which had investigated the **Kapuskasing** colony.

"There is something wrong," he charged, "with the commissioners, their attitude and their motives."

Defends Deputy.

Mr. Ferguson defended Albert Grigg, Deputy Minister of Lands and Forests, from criticisms passed upon him. He denied that Mr. Grigg had stated that French-Canadians were not wanted at **Kapuskasing**. Mr. Grigg's statement, according to Mr. Ferguson, made to a party of returned soldiers, was "We could fill the colony with French-Canadians, but we want you."

"His statement was: 'we don't want French-Canadians here,'" declared J. A. Pinard, East Ottawa.

"If my honorable friend looks up the evidence he will see he is in error," replied Mr. Ferguson.

"Not at all," Mr. Pinard insisted.

"The report presented to this House," continued Mr. Ferguson, "is either the most unfair or has been made by the most superficial survey, as there is no evidence to show that anyone who desired to return to old Ontario was prevented from doing so. Why out of a settlement of 88 at Monteith, 15 were brought back, when they so desired."

Referring to the housing accommodation of the colony, Mr. Ferguson said that those located on the eastern side of the river were the equal of any to be found in any rural settlement of the Province.

Touching upon the section of the report which said the billiard hall was in a dilapidated condition, Mr. Ferguson remarked: "That's the kind of evidence the Commission listened to, instead of getting evidence which might be of use to us here. There are 102 men in the colony. The colony arranged to take the evidence, on the second occasion, under oath in order to secure perfect accuracy. Yet we find that not a single witness was sworn in. It was all voluntary evidence, heard from 63 men. Thirty-nine were not heard from at all, because they had nothing to complain about. Thirty-five were prepared to stay."

"My friend from South-west Toronto, (Mr. H. H. Dewart) with his political motives, sought to stir up discontent in the colony. He has said that at his own expense he sent up a Mr. Carmichael of the Grand Army of Canada, as well as his own private secretary, who is paid \$2,000 a year by the Province, who made a private report which Mr. Dewart used upon the public platform."

Col. Cooper (Toronto): "The report of the G. W. V. A. bears out the Labor party's charges."

"We will compare that later," retorted Mr. Ferguson, who continued: "The 29 complainants would be cut in two or three if they had not been given reason to believe that they could leave the district and come back to old Ontario, have all their debts paid off and receive a bonus of \$1,000. I know that it was quite current up in the colony about October 20th that if they kicked enough somebody would give them what they wanted."

"Looking for Complaints."

"They were looking for complaints, and not for commendation of the scheme," Mr. Ferguson declared, with regard to the investigating commission. He read a number of letters from returned men, expressing satisfaction with conditions at Kapuskasing.

"Were these letters which you read, on file in the department?" inquired M. M. MacBride, South Brant.

"They were, and the commission spent two hours in the department," replied Mr. Ferguson.

"Then it is a down-right shame," affirmed Mr. MacBride, amid vociferous applause from the Conservative benches.

"The commission's report not only exaggerates, but misrepresents, conditions," Mr. Ferguson continued. "These commissioners were accustomed to living lives of comfort or of luxury. Take them out of Kingston or Hamilton, put them up in the north where the snow is deep and there is no carpet on the floor—do this, and then ask them if they like it, and they shake themselves, shimmy-like, and say 'No.'"

Whereat both sides of the House roared with laughter.

"The Prime Minister has said that the commission was appointed for political reasons," Mr. Ferguson continued.

"I said 'non-political reasons,'" Premier Drury corrected him.

"Not Much of a Tory."

"Non-political, then, I agree," Mr. Ferguson assented. "For the fellow he selected as a Tory wasn't much of a Tory. The colonel he selected as a Grit was a good Grit—"

"Are there any," came an ironic query from the Liberal benches.

"A good Grit, who came back from the war with the avowed purpose of being a Laurier candidate in

Hamilton," the Conservative leader continued.

Arose, then, Hon. Walter Rollo.

"If there is no more truth to your other statements than there is to your statement regarding Col. McLaren, the House will know how to take them," declared the Minister of Labor. "I was an opponent of Col. McLaren, and he was not a Laurier candidate."

"As for Prof. Sharpe," Mr. Ferguson went on, "he failed in teaching, then tried farming, and he has lamentably failed in that."

A Warm Exchange.

"The commission was instructed not to stir up any more mud than they could help," stated Premier Drury.

"The only fellows they saw were those who were stirring the mud," Mr. Ferguson shot back. "There were plenty of capable farmer soldiers in North Ontario, who would have gone on the commission, and in whose findings I would have placed the utmost confidence. What I chiefly object to, is that there is not a single word, from end to end, of commendation for the country. The commission has struck a blow at North Ontario and its agricultural possibilities, from which it will take us a long time to recover.